

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 13846 151116Z  
ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 EA-10 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00  
SP-02 DODE-00 /041 W  
-----103745 151315Z /47

R 151040Z MAY 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA  
USMISSION GENEVA  
AMCONSUL HONG KONG  
SECSTATE WASHDC 4538  
INS/CO WASHDC  
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 13846

EO 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SREF TH LA  
SUBJECT: RTG REFUGEE POLICY

FOL MSG RECD ACTION BANGKOK DATED 130453Z MAY 78 AND BEING  
REPEATED FOR YOUR INFO:

C O N F I D E N T I A L CHIANG MAI 182

EO 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SREF, TH, LA  
SUBJ: RTG REFUGEE POLICY

REF: CHIANG MAI 139

SUMMARY: CONSULATE HAS JUST LEARNED OF THE FORCED REPATRIA-  
TION INTO LAOS OF 38 REFUGEES WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN HELD  
AT THE RTG TEMPORARY DETENTION CAMP AT MAE CHAN. AT THE  
SAME TIME, THERE IS A NEW MOI REGULATION LIBERALIZING  
ENTRY OF NEWLY ARRIVED REFUGEES INTO UNHCR CAMPS. EFFECT  
OF TWO MOVES SEEMS TO BE A REFECTION OF THE CONCEPT OF RTG  
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TEMPORARY DETENTION CENTERS, AT LEAST IN THE NORTH. END SUMMARY.

1. CONSULATE FSL VISITED CHIANG RAI MAY 11 AND SPOKE WITH  
VICE GOVERNOR ANAN MECHAMNA. VICE GOVERNOR STATED THAT THE  
MAJORITY OF REFUGEES AT THE RTG DETENTION CAMP AT MAE CHAN  
HAD BEEN FORCIBLY REPATRIATED TO LAOS. AS OF LATE APRIL  
THERE WERE 41 REFUGEES AT MAE CHAN, ALL ETHNIC HMONG AND

LAO. OF THESE, TWO PERSONS HAVE RELATIVES IN THE U.S. AND HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO REMAIN IN MAE CHAN PENDING RESETTLEMENT IN THE U.S. ONE ADDITIONAL REFUGEE HAS BEEN FOUND TO HAVE RELATIVES IN THE UNHCR-SUPPORTED CAMP AT CHIANG KHONG AND HAS BEEN SENT THERE TO JOIN THEM. DURING THE LAST WEEK OF APRIL, THE REMAINING 38 REFUGEES WERE PUT INTO THE CUSTODY OF THAI ARMY, TAKEN TO CHIANG SAEN AND FORCED ACROSS THE BORDER INTO LAOS. NO ATTEMPT WAS MADE TO CONTACT LAO AUTHORITIES ABOUT THIS REPATRIATION. THE VICE GOVERNOR SAID HE DID NOT BELIEVE THE REFUGEES WOULD BE HARMED IN LAOS.

2. FSL ALSO LEARNED THAT UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE FOR NORTH, JACQUES MOUCHET, TRAVELLED TO CHIANG RAI APRIL 27 EXPECTING TO SELECT 8 REFUGEES FROM MAE CHAN FOR RESETTLEMENT IN FRANCE. WHEN HE ARRIVED AT THE CAMP, HE WAS SHOCKED TO LEARN THAT ALL THE REFUGEES HAD DEPARTED.

3. VICE GOVERNOR ALSO TOLD FSL THAT HE HAD JUST RECEIVED A NEW INSTRUCTION FROM MINISTRY OF INTERIOR TO EFFECT THAT ALL NEW REFUGEES WHO ENTER THAILAND OPENLY AND TURN THEMSELVES IN TO THAI AUTHORITIES WILL BE ALLOWED TO ENTER UNHCR CAMPS, PROVIDED THEY DO NOT REPRESENT A THREAT TO SECURITY OF THAILAND. THERE ARE PRESENTLY 8 RECENTLY ARRIVED HMONG REFUGEES IN CHIANG KHONG WHO ARE BENEFICIARIES OF THIS NEW POLICY. THE 8 ARE CURRENTLY BEING INTERVIEWED BY ISOC, AND IF THEY PASS THIS SECURITY TEST, THEY WILL BE ADMITTED TO THE  
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CHIANG KHONG CAMP.

4. COMMENT: WE NOTE THAT THE 41 REFUGEES IN MAE CHAN HAD ENTERED NAN PROVINCE OVERLAND AND HAD BEEN SENT TO THAT CAMP BY NAN GOVERNOR SAISITH. TO DATE, THEY ARE THE ONLY GROUP THAT HAS BEEN SENT THERE. THE RTG DETENTION CAMP AT MAE CHAN HAS BEEN PLAGUED BY A SERIES OF DIFFICULTIES AND HAS NOT YET BEEN TURNED OVER TO THE THAI GOVERNMENT BY THE CONTRACTOR (REFUGEES HAD BEEN HELD IN A NEIGHBORING FACILITY AWAITING CAMP COMPLETION). IN ADDITION, AUTHORITIES HAVE YET TO ESTABLISH A RELIABLE WATER SUPPLY FOR THE CAMP. THUS THERE ARE VALID REASONS FOR MOVING THE REFUGEES TO A MORE CONVENIENT LOCATION, A MOVE WHICH WOULD NECESSARILY ENTAIL SOME DETERMINATION OF THEIR STATUS.

5. AS WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY NOTED (REFTEL), PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES IN CHIANG RAI ARE TENDING TO FOLLOW MOI INSTRUCTIONS TO THE LETTER. THE NEW MOI REGULATION MITIGATES THIS APPROACH SOMEWHAT AND APPEARS TO SIGNAL A RETURN TO UNHCR ASSISTANCE AS A PRIMARY MEANS OF DEALING WITH NEW REFUGEES. IN CHIANG RAI, AT LEAST, THE DETENTION CENTER CONCEPT MAY HAVE PROVEN TOO DIFFICULT TO ADMINISTER, POLITICALLY UNDESIRABLE,

OR BOTH.  
HUHTALA  
UNQUOTE WHITEHOUSE

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NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION  
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**Draft Date:** 15 may 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
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**TAGS:** SREF, TH, LA  
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